

**TOWN OF EAST HAVEN, CT  
EAST HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
35 WHEELBARROW LANE, EAST HAVEN, CT 06513  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2009  
6:00 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** MRS. VITALE, MR. DENUZZO, MRS. PADUA,  
MR. HENNESSEY and MR. INGLESE

**ABSENT:** MRS. VINEYARD (6:10 p.m.); MR. FINKLE and  
MR. HAMMELL (6:11 p.m.); MRS. GERACI-  
ANASTASIO (7:00 p.m.)

**ALSO PRESENT:** MR. ANTHONY SERIO, SUPERINTENDENT

**MR. FRANK MEOLI, ASSISTANT SUPT.  
MRS. MARY ACQUARULO, DIRECTOR OF  
SPECIAL EDUCATION  
MR. JASON LATHROP, BUSINESS ADMIN.  
MR. JOSEPH TRAVAGLINO, DIRECTOR OF  
BLDGS. & GROUNDS**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. DeNuzzo, Chairperson of the Policy & Bylaws Subcommittee, called the joint Policy & Bylaws/Finance Subcommittee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Boardroom at the high school.

**2. Discussion on Policies & Regulations from 8-25-09 Board Meeting**

Mr. Serio reported that four (4) times a year they receive a packet from CAFE advising them of policies that may need to be upgraded. These were used statewide throughout the districts. Mr. DeNuzzo asked if they should not incorporate any of these policies into our district at this time. Mr. Serio felt the Board had the packet a couple of weeks and they had not received any calls or questions. He felt they were ready to push them forward.

**Mrs. Vitale asked that they receive these with the changes highlighted from now on. Mr. Meoli stated they would do this in the future.**

**Mr. Meoli explained how they had to have parents sign and agree to all of the rules regarding the Acceptable Use Policy or their child would not be allowed to use the computers. He would provide them with a copy of this at the next Board meeting.**

Mr. Hennessey asked if this applied to employees as well. Mr. Meoli stated yes.

Mrs. Vitale asked if there were any changes on reporting of child abuse. Mrs. Acquarulo stated it clarified who needed to report.

There was discussion on the cell phone policy and how all electronic equipment was a problem at the high school. Kids could have cell phones but they were not supposed to have them on in the classrooms or hallways. If they violated the policy, parents had to come in at the end of the day to pick them up. Mr. Inglese asked if this was for everyone. If they catch someone on the phone, do they take it? What happened if one teacher doesn't do it, and says the next time they do it, they would take it from them? Mrs. Reale stated they did all they could to keep everyone on the same page.

Mrs. Vineyard arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Mr. DeNuzzo thought they had abbreviated the policy and allowed them to take them to school, turn them off once they were off the bus and put them back on when the last bell rang. It was stated that some parents call and text their children in school.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked if the policy as far as they were concerned was working. It was explained that the kids need to respect the rules but texting was silent.

Mr. Finkle and Mr. Hammell arrived at 6:11 p.m.

**Mrs. Vitale asked that all of the principals receive the upgrades of the policies as well as the Board.**

Mr. DeNuzzo asked if there were any further questions? There were none.

**3. Discussion of EHHS Policy Regarding Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities and Disciplinary Policy**

Mr. Hennessey asked what the story was with this policy. Mrs. Reale stated that this sort of went hand-in-hand with the increased honors program and rigorous classes. They were changing the criteria for freshmen and raising expectations across the board. They were looking to change the eligibility requirements and create a probationary disciplinary policy. It was geared towards students maybe not passing classes and chronic disciplinary behaviors. They were looking to remove them from extracurricular activities. Mrs. Reale explained the process. The first time you inform them of the policy and the second time they have to come to the office and they get a warning. The third time they call the coach, parent and student in and have a meeting. When they were seen the third time, it was explained they have rules that were not meant to be broken. This was a formal meeting. The fourth offense, they would be removed from the extracurricular activity for eight (8) weeks.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked if this was for the whole school year. Mrs. Reale responded yes, it was cumulative. After the fourth time, there was an appeals process. If they were a chronic offender, they put them out for eight weeks and if after that, they were still a chronic offender, they were pretty much put out. Conditions would be factored in.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked who they would appeal it to. Mrs. Reale stated they certainly had a right to go to Central Office and be heard. She felt this was a proactive thing. Mr. DeNuzzo felt it was at least a “heads up”.

Mr. Inglese asked what happened if something happens in the community and not in school. Mrs. Reale felt if it involved a criminal charge, it was a set of other rules such as being eliminated from the team. Mr. Inglese spoke about an incident that had happened outside of the school. Mrs. Reale stated that this would be just for in-school and they could provide something else for outside incidents.

Mr. Hammell felt this would show no favoritism just because a child was more talented than his/her peers.

Mrs. Reale stated this would also extend to the Homecoming Dance and the Prom if it happened during those times. They would lose all privileges. Mr. Hammell asked if they had gone over this during orientation. **Mrs. Reale wanted it approved first and then it would go in the handbook after it was approved. There would be another orientation to make sure they see any changes.**

Mr. Inglese felt four offenses was a lot. There was discussion on this issue and Mr. Proto stated it was four offenses, not four suspensions. Mrs. Padua felt it was very lenient.

Mr. Hammell stated it needed to be fair across the board with no special people for whatever reason. He felt that once it was in the handbook, they should give it to the kids and then go over it in an assembly. After eight weeks, would that student be sitting at four. Mrs. Reale explained any other offense they would keep them out another week.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked if they would be on probation for the rest of the year and Mrs. Reale stated yes.

Mrs. Padua asked what if they were back a week and had another infraction. They would be removed. What if they were off eight weeks and it was around prom time and they did something else? Mrs. Reale explained then they would add another week. They get three chances to do the right thing. They could revise this to say that. Mr. Lathrop asked if these expire each year? Yes.

Mr. Finkle asked what if they make it through the football season and by the last week of the season they hit their fourth strike and this was two weeks before the official tryouts for hockey? This had happened twice before. Was there a grey area there? If they were out for eight (8) weeks and it carried over to two or three weeks also through the try outs? Mrs. Reale stated they would be out of two sports. It would be brought to their attention and the parents when this was put in place. They would be out of the game. They would work with them to make sure it was clear to them with copies sent to the parents. Everything would be put in writing to make sure it was documented.

There was discussion on core classes and how many had to be passed and how many they could fail. With one core class they could stay after school and get the course out of the hole. With two classes you wouldn't be able to get out of that hole.

Mr. Hammell felt it was high time people understood it was a privilege to do the things they do. They were here for an education and that was first and foremost. Mr. DeNuzzo thought if they flunked two classes they were not eligible to play sports. Mrs. Reale stated they needed to pass four classes; that was the minimum. Schools were allowed to change this. Each district was different. Mrs. Padua asked where they needed to be. Mrs. Reale stated they needed to see kids fail none. Mrs. Padua felt that a "C" average was generous.

Mr. Hammell asked why it takes so long. Mr. Hennessey stated that it was because this was a huge change for us if you changed it immediately. You have to be careful. Mr. Inglese would rather go to 70.

Mr. Hennessey asked if this was for failing after the marking period, not during the marking period. Mrs. Reale stated no, it would be the official failure grade. Mr. Hennessey asked who had access to the grades on our computer system because in the past they had been changed. Mrs. Reale said she could not speak to that and hoped there was no breach of that. Mr. Hennessey asked if they were all password protected. Mrs. Reale stated they did the best they could. Mr. Proto stated that teachers post their own grades. Mr. Hennessey asked if they know who changes the grades. He felt someone needed to answer that question because they have had that problem in the past. He knows it happened. Mr. Meoli stated that there should be an audit trail for that. Mr. Proto stated it goes back to the last user. If someone leaves their computer unprotected, it may not be the person who made the change, but it may be on their account. There was an audit to the last change.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked if the teacher was the only one who could change that. No other people can change it? An administrator or data processing person can change it. Once the marking period was over, teachers could not make a change. The data processing person would have to go in and make a change. Mr. DeNuzzo stated if the grade was posted and before it became final, it might affect that person's

ability to play sports; could any other person make that change or was it written in stone? Mr. Proto responded just the data processing person. Mrs. Reale asked if the grade had been changed back. Mr. Hennessey stated he did not know because the whole thing just kind of died out.

Mr. Hennessey stated he totally supported this whole thought process. Kids were getting lazier and lazier. He totally supported all of this.

Mr. DeNuzzo stated he really liked this. If anyone had any thoughts or input as far as changing this for this year, they could call Mrs. Reale and tweak it and bring it back to a meeting.

Mrs. Padua felt students should not be allowed to fail anything and they should just make the change and be done with it. Mrs. Vitale stated they would be holding up the handbook and she wanted to act on it tonight. Mr. Hammell suggested they do a poll of what everyone's opinion was instead of calling Mrs. Reale.

Mrs. Padua had a problem with it. They should not be able to fail anything. If they were going to make a change, they should make it in one fell swoop and be done with it. They should make it right now.

Mrs. Vitale asked if Mr. Hennessey agreed with that. Mr. Hennessey felt it was a big change for our kids. Mr. Finkle stated that for many years this was a very grey area. If they failed two classes and received good progress reports from their teachers, it created a really grey area. He did not like the fact that to fail a class, it was going to create an issue this year. If they were able to get hard core for one class next year and move the bar to the next level. He liked if you were under a 70, you don't play. The school year had already started.

Mrs. Padua wanted to know if the importance was on football, hockey or education. She could not condone failing a class. Mr. Finkle stated that not every student was about academics here. If a student opts to take a really tough class and fails a class, this was a grey area. If he gets a 59/60 he would be able to play. Athletics kept his mind on the other grades. Now if they change it, would the student lose complete interest?

Mr. Serio felt they should accept this policy upgrade without a doubt and play it out and see how it works for them. It was easy for them to make them because they have to enforce them.

Mr. Hennessey spoke about how they had graduated only 210 kids and they had lost 90 kids from the 300. Mrs. Padua felt this would push them ahead, but Mr. Hennessey responded pushing them ahead, or pushing them out? Mr. Finkle said the question was, “What are we losing them to?” Adult Ed? How many drop out? **Why does the year start with 300 and the year ends with 210 being handed a diploma? Where do they fall in? Do they drop out? Mrs. Reale stated she could put something together.**

Mr. Proto suggested they put some requirements on getting into Adult Education such as the number of credits needed.

Mr. Serio suggested they continue this in the regular meeting so that Mr. Lathrop could report on the 2008-09 Operating Budget.

#### **4. Review the Invoices for Fiscal Years 2008-09 and 2009-10**

Mr. Lathrop stated they had two financial reports for bills for 2008-09 and 2009-10. Mr. Finkle asked if this closed out the year 2008-09. Mr. Lathrop responded that it did close out the 2008-09 and they had filed the ED001. Mr. Finkle stated that was early—good job. There were no other questions on the bills.

#### **5. Report on Fiscal Year 2008-09 Operating Budget**

Mr. Lathrop apologized for not including the information in the Board packets. He asked them to take a moment to read through it and he would discuss the highlights with them. Mr. Lathrop stated the first paragraph discusses how some of the factors affected the 2008-09 fiscal year Board of Education. There were no surplus funds to return to the Town. There was the bill for the final payment to the Medical Insurance Fund in the amount of \$371,000 this year 2008-09. He reviewed the documents based upon discussion with all of the parties and tried to get to the bottom of it. The outcome, which he felt was important to inform the Board of Education and which was part of the audit, was that there was an error of posting which resulted in a significant amount of funds, \$560,000 being charged to the 2007-

08 year which were not posted there. After a review with the auditors, a portion of those funds remained and were pushed forward into the 2008-09 fiscal year. The Board of Education was saddled with \$560,000 worth of expenditures and three months to try and make up for that problem. Despite the Board's best attempt at placing a freeze into effect in November 2008, we were not able to make up the full amount of self-insurance payment scheduled to go to the Town/Board shared Medical Insurance Fund for May and June.

Mr. Lathrop explained that after he arrived here, every effort was made to wrap up the fiscal year to properly account for all of the remaining bills and expenses which left \$371,000 to go into the Medical Self-Insurance Fund. Two payments to this fund were deferred from this fund in the amount of approximately \$1.1 million.

After reviewing the expenses, he then took a look at the revenues. A deficiency in revenues that might have contributed to make our final payment into the medical self-insurance fund was brought to light while at face value our revenues increased to \$3.8 million, in reality if they net out the revenues which he had discussed briefly, our actual revenue decreased, and specifically reflected one transportation grant that was passed through to the Town to go to the Board of Education in the amount of \$400,000. This was not reflected or credited to the Board of Education account for approximately \$440,000 this year. If you combine those two items, there are mitigating factors.

Mr. DeNuzzo asked which grant this was. Mr. Lathrop responded it was the Transportation Equalization Grant. Mr. Hammell asked if the grants go to the Town first. Mr. Lathrop stated yes. The Town doles out that money to us? Correct. How do you account for all of that? How do you make sure grant money given to the Town for specific reasons for education are getting to the Board of Education? Was there a process? Statutorily there was one big one which was the Special Education Excess Cost. By law it comes to the Board of Education. Beyond that, it is worked out between the Board and Town to make sure the funds come to us and that it doesn't change in mid-stream and reflect negatively on the Board of Education.

Mr. Hammell asked if the grant money was given to the Town at some point in time. Mr. Lathrop stated the money did not make it into our budget. What was the legality of that? There was only one

legality and that was regarding Special Excess Cost for Special Education. However, when he looked at the history, we had been receiving those funds, and in 2008-09, we did not receive it. There was no legal recourse. Mr. Hammell asked how could they keep track of any funds they might be getting in and if they get here. Mr. Lathrop stated he would be providing them with reports on a monthly basis. Mr. Serio stated if they had received the \$440,000 that payment of \$370,000 would be larger, but this was not something they had received.

Mr. Finkle spoke about expectations of receiving certain grant monies, such as \$165,000, and building the budget on getting those funds. At some point in time, they see a posting showing that the Board received \$165,000. Then as they go to close out the books at the end of the year and they still have not received those monies as they passed through the Town or the Town says they never received the monies or they tell us they received the monies and we did not get it.

Mr. Lathrop stated he did not build this budget, but based upon the fiscal outcome, it was expected. In addition to that, \$560,000 plus \$400,000, and they would have been very close to making the share for the Town/Board Medical Self-Insurance Fund. He wanted to make sure on this page they broke out what their actual expenses were and what the cost offsets were that helped to defray those expenses.

Mr. Lathrop then spoke about the Pathways Program. The State Board of Education's fiscal office requested we show any revenues coming from that program as revenues to East Haven Public School and expenses were shown as expenses under Non-Public Tuitions. In the past, they never reflected these, but they were required by the State to show this. It makes Special Ed look higher in one year because of the change in policy.

Mrs. Geraci-Anastasio arrived at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Lathrop spoke about some of the other revenues and notified the Board that they will receive reports discussing the budget to actual expenses by object code for all funds. He would start these reports at the second Board of Education meeting every month with the hopes of reports the first Board meeting of every month.

Mr. Hennessey asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Hammell asked about the revenue rentals. If they rent the football field out to Southern Connecticut for a soccer game and charge them “x” amount of dollars for different fees, custodial or maintenance or whatever. Was there something in place that when all was said and done and everyone leaves the field? Was there a damage report or accountability of what exactly did it cost us and what we took in? Was anything in place to safeguard our property and to make sure we were not renting it out at a loss?

Mr. Travaglino responded they do ask for a deposit which they did not release until well after the event happened. In addition, all lessees have to have an insurance policy protecting the Board to the tune of \$200,000.

Mr. Hammell asked about how they know what the cost was going to be for us based on the renter’s event, the number of people, custodians, security people, etc. Mr. Travaglino stated that that was built in and it was in addition to the cost of using the space. How about when they had to hire someone? This was also an additional cost to the renter.

Mr. Hammell asked if someone physically inspected the place after the event and filled out paperwork that said they rented it out for “x” number of dollars to make sure it was fine. Was there damage and how much would it cost to fix it? Mr. Travaglino responded that no there wasn’t something in place but they were in the process of reformatting everything. They had new people and a new financial manager and it would be incorporated into something where they have loose ends and they did know it. They recognized this more so in the auditorium and they were moving in this direction. They would be working with the East Haven Art’s Commission and formatting some way to give them a revenue stream and give us what we need.

**6. Any other business that might rightfully come before this subcommittee**

There was no other business this evening.

**7. ADJOURNMENT OF FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

Mrs. Vineyard made a motion to adjourn the subcommittee meeting to start the Regular Board Meeting. Mrs. Padua seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion, no objections, and no abstentions. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**MR. THOMAS HENNESSEY, CHAIRPERSON  
FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

**MR. RONALD DENUZZO, CHAIRPERSON  
POLICY & BYLAWS SUBCOMMITTEE**